



New Zealand AIDS Foundation
Te Tūāpapa Mate Ārai Kore o Aotearoa

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Catherine Ellis-Blair
Auckland District Health Board
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Consultation Document: Sexual Health Services Staffing Model

Dear Catherine

I am writing in my capacity as the Executive Director of the New Zealand AIDS Foundation upon hearing of the current proposal to cut Senior Medical Officer FTE in the Auckland Regional Sexual Health Service.

The New Zealand AIDS Foundation is New Zealand's leading organisation with a mission of preventing the transmission of HIV and supporting those living with HIV. We enjoy a strong and long-standing relationship with Auckland Regional Sexual Health Service and see the Auckland District Health Board more broadly as a key ally in the delivery of our work.

We are at a critical junction in New Zealand's response to HIV prevention. Recent scientific breakthroughs, supported by real-world evidence, demonstrate that treatment-based prevention can complement existing condom promotion efforts to drive down new HIV infections. The frustrating irony is that as we face this excellent opportunity, we are seeing the highest numbers of new HIV infections annually. 2016 is set to continue the trend upward that began five years ago.

While there is opportunity to be taken, we are also facing serious challenges. To learn of the current proposal to cut Senior Medical Officer FTE at Auckland Sexual Health only adds to a growing and alarming perception that there is gross a lack of political and DHB leadership in responding to the serious HIV and broader sexual health challenges we are facing.

Alarming, new HIV infections are significantly concentrated in Auckland. Men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM), a priority population for your service, made up 81% of new diagnoses in 2015 where infection occurred in New Zealand. Of those MSM, 60% reside in Auckland. Moreover, there is an exploding and growing syphilis epidemic in this group. This trend mirrors international trends in skyrocketing sexually transmitted infection rates, not only among MSM but several other key populations served by the Auckland Regional Sexual Health Service.

Also of concern to the NZAF is the potential risk that the proposal poses for a current collaboration between the ADHB, the NZAF, Body Positive and the

University of Auckland. The *PrEP Demonstration Project* is a crucial element to an expanding HIV prevention strategy. The project requires senior medical oversight and we would be seriously concerned should the project fall over as a consequence of any decisions taken to reduce Senior Medical Officer FTE.

Overall, the NZAF would like to strongly urge planning and funding decision makers to re-visit the proposed FTE cuts in Senior Medical Officers in the consultation document.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you wish to discuss any of the issues I have raised in person.

Warmest regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Myers', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr Jason Myers
Executive Director